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THE MEANING OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE

BY CHARLES M. PEPPER,

Washington, D. C.

When we began to discuss the Monroe Doctrine I was reminded of the definition which a famous English jurist gave of metaphysics. He said, "metaphysics is two men in a dark room hunting for a black hat which is not there." We have not had any dark room. We have had plenty of light, but when we started out perhaps a good many of us felt we were hunting for a black hat which is not here. But whatever the Monroe Doctrine may be I think before we are through we will succeed in finding it out.

I have noticed the general trend of the discussion is along two lines: First, as to the Latin-American view; and second, as to, not the European view, because Europe never has views, but as to the European attitude regarding the Monroe Doctrine. I confess myself to a great deal of enlightenment on both points.

The general tendency, as reflected by the papers of Mr. Barrett and others, is not to agree with college professors in other cities that the Monroe Doctrine is obsolete. There is nothing more to say there, but I think there is an idea that in some way it is to be superseded by what Mr. Barrett called the doctrine of Pan-American comity, or some general term such as that. We all appreciate what Mr. Barrett has done towards producing Pan-American comity, but as Mr. Barrett said, there is one difficulty in the way. Our Latin-American friends hate to be patronized. We owe a great deal to him and to ex-Minister Sherrill and to Professor Rowe and others for the work they have done in the last few years in educating our people about Latin America. When we come to the Latin-American view it is set forth very clearly, indeed, in Mr. Grahame's paper, especially in reference to Argentina.

The common notion seems to be that if the Monroe Doctrine is superseded, it will be replaced by what is called the A B C doctrine, an alliance of certain large countries in South America, who, in coöperation with the United States, will work for peace there. We all want peace in Latin America and hope it may be gained by work-

ing together. By the A B C doctrine is meant the alliance of Argentina, Brazil and Chile. This has one drawback. Other Latin-American countries are very jealous of their territorial integrity and of their independence. It may not be an independence, it may not be a sovereignty, such as Mr. Low's country after a thousand years' practice has attained through self-government, but they prize it. There is jealousy of the United States, which I regret to say is cultivated for commercial reasons by our European friends, and is one of the reasons why we hear frequently of an Anglo-German alliance advocated in South America.

Yet the South American countries, with a few exceptions among those bordering the Caribbean, are not afraid of territorial absorption or land grabbing by the United States. A year ago a young Argentine poet was in the United States, talking against what he called "Yankee imperialism." He also went to every important Central and South American country and delivered his address there. In Bolivia he was listened to very respectfully but the leading newspaper of La Paz stated that Bolivia needed not to guard against Yankee imperialism but against the imperialism from the south, from its own neighbors.

I have always got along very well with my Latin-American friends by talking plainly. We should be sympathetic with them, as the saying is, but we must look at South America as a whole. Knowing the conditions there we note the constant fear in some countries of absorption by their neighbors. When we come to discuss the Monroe Doctrine historically and view our diplomatic relations and the diplomatic correspondence in the files of the state department, we find numerous instances in which the smaller countries of Latin America have appealed to the United States against the aggression of the larger ones and our good offices have always been exercised, and exercised successfully, in their behalf. But a new doctrine of comity based on the theory that the United States and three South American governments could regulate the rest of this hemisphere would cause much more ill-feeling than now exists. We should work harmoniously, should work with these stronger countries of South America, and should encourage them in what they are doing and depend on them to extend their influence, but I think we can dismiss the idea that the Monroe Doctrine can be superseded by any A B C doctrine.

One reason for this growing restiveness concerning the Monroe Doctrine in South American countries is perhaps the self-consciousness of some of those countries. All countries in their day have had the big head. We had it some years back when we boasted of our national greatness as the result largely of a material growth. Canada had it, and had it quite recently, on account of her growth. Some of our Latin-American friends who are growing very rapidly have got the same feeling now. I do not say it in the offensive sense, but it is an enlarged idea of national consciousness. It is a proper conception of their own power and their own influence. That is one reason that we find so many vigorous objections to the Monroe Doctrine now coming from two or three of these countries, but it seems to me they go to too great a length. Most of you have received a circular letter sent out recently by Dr. Zeballos, who was formerly the minister of foreign affairs in Argentina, and who delivered the address of welcome to ex-President Roosevelt at the convocation of the University of Buenos Ayres. He set forth what he claimed was the Argentine view, henceforth to be known as the Zeballos-Roosevelt protocol, and predicted it would supersede the Monroe Doctrine. Now eminent as any individual may be, eminent even as Dr. Zeballos and Mr. Roosevelt are, I do not think they can undertake to supersede the Monroe Doctrine by a protocol between themselves.

In connection with the Argentina view just one more thought comes to me. The vast British investments there undoubtedly give Great Britain a tremendous influence, but she is not going to war on account of those investments. They are safe. Yet there might be another cause. Argentina today does not recognize British sovereignty anywhere in the South Atlantic. The Falkland Islands have been under the British flag for more than half a century, but the Argentine Republic does not recognize that there is such a government as Great Britain there. Now we can conceive that England for some purpose or other might insist on Argentina's recognizing her sovereignty in the Falkland Islands. Suppose she should send her fleet down there. I am not quite so sure that Argentina would not then look to the United States, would not invoke the Monroe Doctrine in some form. Ordinarily it is not wise to put out strained hypotheses, but sometimes they enable us to understand possible situations.

Another reason why we cannot depend too much upon the most

powerful Latin-American countries to render the Monroe Doctrine unnecessary—and I say it with great respect for what they have done—is because they are yet in the process of evolution. We give them credit for what they are doing for republican institutions but we cannot affirm that all of them have passed the first stages of growth. The other day we read dispatches saying Brazil is liable to have a serious revolution in half a dozen states. These states are as a rope of sand holding the nation together. Those of us who know how little power the general government possesses understand that Brazil has yet great problems before her. It is not improbable that in working out these problems there will be periods of internal disorder and unrest. There have been periods not so very far distant when Germany was threatening to send a fleet to Brazil and she was most offensive in her attitude.

Another point occurs to me. It is no longer possible that internal conditions will prevail in the United States such that a European power would find us unable to enforce our construction of the Monroe Doctrine. But when we review some of the chapters of American history during the Civil War when we had our hands full at home, these reveal that Europe was not then considerate. That was the period when the French invaded Mexico to set Maximilian on a throne. It was an invasion. It was the period when Spain was hoping to resume authority in Santo Domingo. It was the period when the French government under Napoleon the Third negotiated with the Ecuadorian government for a French protectorate over Ecuador. We have more than gathered strength since that Civil War. We will never have a civil war again, God please, but in our relations with foreign nations we are not so sure that war never will occur. We cannot be sure that between now and let us say 2014, we may not have complications with some foreign nation, and are we quite sure then no European countries would take advantage of that situation to establish themselves in South America? We have no question as to what the ultimate result would be, but the possibility is one of the reasons that make me doubt whether it is wise to abolish the Monroe Doctrine.

You all know about the Galapagos Islands off Ecuador. We do not need to lease them ourselves since the Panama Canal is built and we are established off Panama Bay. We do not need them, but it is quite conceivable that if we were in difficulties—I will not

mention Asia, because it is a live wire like Mexico—but if we were in difficulties, I will say with Denmark, some Asiatic power or some European power might want to take the Galapagos Islands. I have not a question then that the American people would say it was a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, and they would also define the doctrine.

I have just a word in regard to the European attitude, which I have formed from the interesting paper of Mr. Low. I have listened to his instructive address with a great deal of interest, yet after all it occurs to me that there may be such a thing as ignorance in Europe about the Monroe Doctrine—historical ignorance. I was recently in South America where our English friends are so well established that if you want a stenographer you have to go to some English firm for some young Englishman to take your dictation. I had occasion to write a good deal about this Monroe Doctrine, to refer to it in dictating letters, and my friend's fellow countryman wrote it "Munro Doctrine." Now that is a trifling historical error, but it has frequently occurred to me that perhaps after all the great English public does not know as much about the Monroe Doctrine as it ought to know. I perceive one difficulty in the attitude of Europe toward Latin America. The repudiation of debts in the Latin-American states undoubtedly has been a shame, a disgrace to them, but there has been very great improvement in the last few years. My recollection is that the last Hague Conference found a formula on that subject following Dr. Drago's suggestions first laid down in the Argentine note to the United States at the time of the Venezuela blockade. But here comes a question—the European attitude is that they should have the right to go in and by force collect a just debt. That is it, isn't it?

MR. LOW: Yes.

MR. PEPPER: Now if Europe has the right to go in by force to any Latin-American country and collect a just debt—and, of course, to the creditor a debt is always just—that one hundred million debt of Honduras to those English creditors is always just—then they have the right to go into other countries. The newspapers recently published the protest of the British bondholders committee against seven states of the United States which were charged with repudiating their debts. If the Monroe Doctrine is no bar to Great Britain's collecting debts in Latin America by force what is the position with

regard to the United States? If she has the right to enforce debt collection in Latin America by gunboats what could we say, what objection could we make if the British fleet appeared off North Carolina, Florida or Georgia and asked for payment of debts alleged to have been repudiated by those states?

In spite of the scandals of the past in the repudiation of debts by Latin-American countries, these countries have made very great progress, and I do not believe the matter of debt collection is ever going to be of serious consequence in connection with the Monroe Doctrine. The countries will pay their debts. The Argentine Republic after fifty years paid the loan obtained from its English creditors.

Now we come to the Monroe Doctrine proper. It is indefinite perhaps, but it is to the American people after all a live doctrine. It is a flexible doctrine, it changes and is affected by circumstances, as we have recently had very convincing evidences, but the Monroe Doctrine has held for a hundred years. It is more than a formula. It is a principle for our safety. It represents the aspiration of the whole of the people of the United States in regard to Latin America.

It is for whatever government may be in power, for whatever administration, whatever Congress may be in power, to interpret the doctrine in the light of developments, in the light of circumstances; not to confuse it, as with Mexico, with anarchy at our door, but to interpret it in justice to the American people, with the understanding, with the feeling, that it is to be applied in justice. It represents, as Professor Latané has said, a cardinal principle of American diplomacy that is vital to the American people, and without injustice to Europe, without injustice to any Latin-American country, I have no question that fifty years from now we will still be discussing the Monroe Doctrine as a live doctrine.